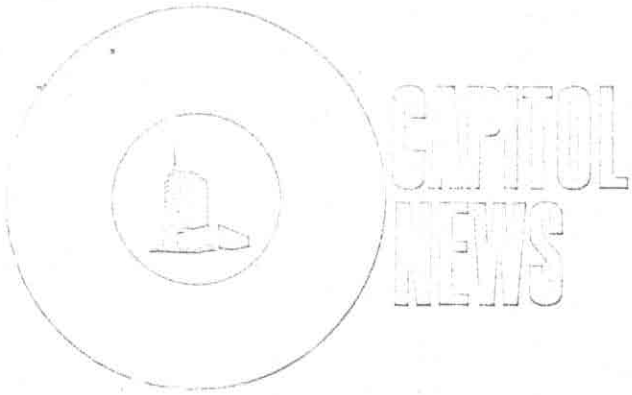

"THE CONTROVERSY" --

HOW IT WAS MADE

HOLLYWOOD -- In the last week of November, 1966, Alan Livingston, President of Capitol Records, retained journalist Lawrence Schiller to produce another record for Capitol's "Probe" series, this time an in-depth study of the assassination of John F. Kennedy and the controversy that has emerged.

Schiller started out in much the same way he had done so many times when working for national magazines. He had three weeks in which to gather the needed material, for Capitol had already set a release date of January 6, 1967. On the 24th of November, a team which consisted of a secretary, a researcher and the narration writer, Richard Warren Lewis, set out to investigate the controversy that had stemmed from the Warren Commission Report, in addition to checking the facts that were already a matter of public record. Schiller and his team travelled 11,000 miles, taping interviews with those who were witness to the assassination, the advocates and critics of the Warren Report and many more involved in the controversy that followed. The goal was not only to review the past evidence and testimony but to delve into the findings of the critics and to see if proper credence had been given to their charges.

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During the first days, Schiller contacted members of the Warren Commission -- House Minority Leader, Congressman Gerald R. Ford and Assistant Counsel for the Commission, Wesley J. Liebeler. Since it was known that Jack Ruby's voice had never been heard since his killing of Lee Harvey Oswald, it was obvious that Ruby's statements should be part of Probe's audio-documentary. In an effort to obtain the recording, he contacted Phil Burleson, a Dallas attorney who represented Jack Ruby. Schiller was referred to Elmer Gertz and members of the Ruby family to see whether it would be possible to record Ruby, who was then under intensive medical care because of an infectious cancer.

While those discussions took place, primarily on the phone, Schiller and his team began work on other parts of the LP. First they flew to Dallas and spent days interviewing and bringing back to the scene of the assassination members of the Presidential motorcade and witnesses who had lived through those short moments that had become a lifetime to them . From there, Schiller flew to Washington, D. C. to meet with Congressman Gerald R. Ford and to start checking the facts at the National Archives, from which critics like Mark Lane, Harold Weisberg and Penn Jones Jr. had based their theories and thus caused a public outcry.

Schiller continued his journey to New York and then on to Massachusetts to interview author Edward Jay Epstein; back to New York for further interviews with the controversial Mark Lane; on to Philadelphia to talk to Arlen Spector of the Commission; and then to Washington, D. C. again, to meet with author Harold Weisberg.

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While in Washington Schiller found in the Archives a piece of recording tape that reportedly had the sounds of the actual shots fired at the Presidential motorcade. A careful, objective investigation of the tape revealed that it was a phony re-enactment, so professionally done that even the National Archives had it marked as an actuality. But he told Bill & me he had the real thing

false

On his return to Dallas for the second time, Schiller found that he was the first person to interview Mrs. Caroline Walther, a Dallas housewife, who saw two men and a rifle in a window of the Texas School Book Depository Building just seconds before the assassination. Mrs. Walther is one of several witnesses on the record who have never been called before the Warren Commission or its counsel to testify.

In mid-December, Schiller returned to Los Angeles with more than 370 legal-size typewritten pages of interviews which had been distilled from 44 hours of tape recordings. These interviews were with dozens of witnesses, authors and many unknown people who constructively contributed to the case.

Only a week before Schiller's production deadline, the Ruby family gave permission to tape Jack Ruby in Parkland Hospital. Unknown to anyone but the family, Schiller returned to Dallas and was able to place recording equipment, hidden in a briefcase, in the hospital room at Parkland. Jack Ruby, with full knowledge of the taping in advance, was told in Yiddish (a slang which is derived from German and spoken by some members of the Jewish faith), "The tape recorder is in here, in the briefcase. Talk into it," while a guard,

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who is stationed 24 hours a day in his room, stood only a few feet away, unaware that the recording was being made.

Schiller then flew back to Los Angeles to finish the production of the third album in Capitol's "Probe" series, "The Controversy."

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